

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information apparatus, comprising:

a determination unit which determines a presence/  
absence of a received mail message via a network; and

5       a control unit which acquires and stores, when  
the determination unit determines the presence of the  
received mail message, the received mail message in  
a storage medium, and outputs video data which contains  
image information to notify of a fact of mail reception  
10       from a video output terminal to a television receiver.

2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein  
the control unit transmits information indicating the  
fact of mail reception to a computer corresponding to  
a destination user of the received mail message via  
15       a network.

3. The apparatus according to claim 1, further  
comprising a display unit which displays information,  
the control unit being capable of displaying  
information indicating the fact of mail reception on  
20       the display unit.

4. The apparatus according to claim 1, further  
comprising a television tuner which receives and  
processes broadcast program data,  
the control unit being capable of outputting, to  
25       the television receiver, video data generated by  
superimposing the image information at a predetermined  
position on an image of the broadcast program data.

5. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the image information contains a message or icon.

6. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a browse processing unit which executes  
5 a user authentication process in response to an input operation corresponding to a browse request of the received mail message, reads out information of the received mail message for a corresponding user from the storage medium in accordance with an authentication  
10 result, and outputs video data containing the read-out information to the television receiver.

7. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a browse processing unit which executes  
15 a user authentication process in response to a browse request of the received mail message sent from a computer via a network, reads out information of the received mail message for a corresponding user from the storage medium in accordance with an authentication result, and transmits the read-out information to the  
20 computer.

8. A mail control method applied to an information apparatus having a video output terminal, the method comprising:

determining a presence/absence of a received mail  
25 message via a network; and

acquiring and storing, when the presence of the received mail message is determined in the

determination, the received mail message in a storage medium and outputting video data containing image information to notify of a fact of mail reception from the video output terminal to a television receiver.

5           9. The method according to claim 8, further comprising:

transmitting, when the presence of the received mail message is determined in the determination, information indicating the fact of mail reception to  
10 a computer corresponding to a destination user of the received mail message via a network.

10. The method according to claim 8, further comprising:

displaying, when the presence of the received mail  
15 message is determined in the determination, information indicating the fact of mail reception on a display unit equipped on the information apparatus.

11. The method according to claim 8, further comprising:

20 receiving and processing broadcast program data by a television tuner; and

outputting, to the television receiver, video data generated by superimposing the image information at a predetermined position on an image of the broadcast  
25 program data.

12. The method according to claim 8, wherein the image information contains a message or icon.

13. The method according to claim 8, further comprising:

executing a user authentication process in  
response to an input operation corresponding to  
5 a browse request of the received mail message; and  
reading out information of the received mail  
message for a corresponding user from the storage  
medium in accordance with an authentication result,  
and outputting video data containing the read-out  
10 information to the television receiver.

14. The method according to claim 8, further comprising:

executing a user authentication process in  
response to a browse request of the received mail  
15 message sent from a computer via a network; and  
reading out information of the received mail  
message for a corresponding user from the storage  
medium in accordance with an authentication result, and  
transmitting the read-out information to the computer.